

EGREMONT GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES June 11, 2020

The meeting opened at 11:04 a.m. via Zoom.

Present were Juliette Haas, Marj Wexler (Chair), Pat Konecky, Corinna Barnard, Emily Eyre, Robin Goldberg.

Minutes of the May 14 meeting were accepted after Corinna incorporated three typo corrections offered by Marj.

Members gave a warm welcome back to Robin Goldberg.

Sustainability Coordinator: The DEP recycling materials grant has been submitted and the Town should hear back in October, with \$3,800 expected. Full Transfer Station services will be reopening soon, with some tweaks. One example: Bill Wood, the supervisor, will no longer be accepting money. After a discussion about the reopening of redemption centers and thrift shops it was agreed that a member of the committee would research what was going on and send out an email.

Tool Library subcommittee: The digital library has not yet launched due to Covid.

Year-Round Roadside Cleanup: Marj said 15 people are on her list who will do a section of a road and would sign up for it. But the system will be informal, not part of the Adopt a Highway program that has to be approved by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

Video Signage for Transfer Station Use: Members agreed it was not the time to pursue this, given the money and time required. However, Juliette said that since the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility is starting a new contract on July 1, it will be rolling out educational material and signs about the changes, which the Town might use. Among the MRF rule changes: aerosols and shredded paper no longer accepted; clear plastic cups now accepted, but with restrictions that could make the collection confusing and prone to contamination.

Transportation Advisory Committee: Pat said the committee is having trouble getting the Berkshire Regional Transportation Authority to seriously consider its re-routing suggestions to make the system more efficient. However, the BRTA is asking people, via its website, to fill out a

survey and the advisory committee is encouraging citizens to complete it and whenever possible encourage the BRTA to consider its route optimization plan. Pat also said the advisory committee has expanded its scope beyond BRTA and is now researching the overall transportation needs of South County.

Inviting "associate members" to join Green Committee: Emily said people could be invited to join the committee on an informal basis; either by bringing in a project for committee support, like the Plastic-Free October Challenge, or simply lending a hand. Emily said it might make it possible to assign tasks and reduce the work load on members. An associate member would not have to be approved by the Select Board. Marj said the committee could take two approaches: No. 1) Notify residents that we are looking for help and/or No. 2) Recruit help for a specific project. Emily suggested that participants in the Egremont October Plastic Challenge might be tapped. Robin said the committee could ask for help on the year-round roadside cleanup project. Marj said she would pursue a general request for helpers.

Partnering with Great Barrington on some projects: Pat said that Great Barrington has a fairly new sustainability committee and that she would look into possibilities for collaboration.

Mass DEP May 12 webinar "The Future and Safety of ReUse in MA:" Emily reported on the webinar. She said an epidemiologist speaker considered the risk of spreading the virus by surface contact to be low, but still advised following the CDC guidelines to avoid causing psychological stress. Generating confidence in reuse initiatives now requires assurances about cleanliness and sanitization via educational materials such as signage, fliers and videos. Because people are stressed about Covid and social unrest, this is not considered a good time to initiate changes. Pat also watched the webinar and said it inspired her to think about starting a physical tool library. Pat will reach out to towns and libraries around the country that are already doing this for pointers and guidelines. She added that the DEP is developing an online reuse directory and is asking communities for recommendations. Emily noted that the Housatonic Library has a "library of things" that could be checked after it reopens. Marj noted that the big question was where to locate a physical tool library and that the only immediate answer seemed to be the annex.

Town Hall parking lot: Marj raised the idea of asking the Town to use a more environmentally friendly permeable material instead of the asphalt currently being considered. Juliette said the new parking lot was on the Town Warrant. After some discussion, members agreed to keep the meeting open and reconvene for a one-topic meeting on the subject on June 15.

Edge articles: Corinna suggested that the next column provide tips for fighting excess trash during Covid-19, such as hanging on to containers until redemption centers reopen, sharing tools carefully, bags supermarket purchases in the parking lot and into reusable bags in your car.

Otherwise the standing queue remains:

- 1) Virtual tool library – about a community effort and sharing in general. (Spring)
- 2) MRF town materials and the shifts underway locally in the recycling industry.
- 3) BRTA bus routes to South County.
- 4) Rollout for rebates for EVs are back from state.
- 5) Findings of the National Grid's Green Communities program, begun in 2012. Data from these various certified communities shows the strides possible in reducing electricity consumption (renewables, conservation & efficiency). Biggest challenge is transportation (which could provide a tie-in with No. 3 & No. 4).

Meeting resumed via Zoom with the same participants on Monday, June 15 at 5 p.m.

Marj said that the question for the committee was if she should go to the Town meeting and ask that the Town Hall parking lot be stopped until a permeable surface alternative to black top is considered.

Emily said that she and Marj met with a salesman for Presto Geosystems, which markets a permeable-material surfacing material.

Members established that the Town wants to get rid of the current surface to prevent flooding, erosion and mud. Since the June 11 part of the meeting, Juliette had asked Select Board Member Mary Brazie about the issue. Mary said Town officials decided against using an airport mix because it was

gritty and likely to bring grit into Town Hall via shoes. Black top was also considered easier to plow.

Emily said that, given the size and location of the project, she did not see any cause for serious concern about runoff from an asphalt surface. Emily described two types of permeable alternative. One resembles patio pavers (expensive and seen more on driveways, college campuses and affluent towns) and the other resembles interlocking honeycomb plastic grids filled with gravel (more affordable but feels similar to walking on gravel). Both types sit on a bed of gravel which acts to percolate rain water and snow melt.

Marj said the Presto Geosystems' sales representative thought the price for the interlocking-grid type would be roughly equivalent with asphalt. (His estimate was under the warrant price of \$70,000.) She said a case could be made either way, but one reason to choose a permeable option is because it gave the Town a chance to set a good environmental example.

A motion was passed to have the committee address the Warrant article with a statement about the importance of the Town pursuing environmental solutions for such projects. Five votes in favor with one abstention (Juliette).

The meeting that began on June 11, 2020 adjourned on June 15 at 5:45.

Submitted by Corinna Barnard